



Spring 2010

Volume 2, Issue 1

## Save The Date—2010 WYSAAG Conference

Date: August 8, 9, and 10, 2010

Location: Laramie Hilton Hotel and Conference Center  
2229 Grand Ave  
Laramie, WY 82070

Schedule:

August 8 Town Hall Meeting and Vision Setting, hosted by the MHSASD  
with Olmstead funds  
2:00 – 5:00 p.m. Snack-Food Reception 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

August 9 WYSAAG Conference and Banquet funded by Mental Health Block  
Grant funds  
WYSAAG Board elections will take place that day

August 10 WYSAAG Conference  
(Morning) New Board meeting will be that morning

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## Have you been WRAPPED?

The goals of Mental Health Recovery and Wrap are to teach participants recovery and self-management skills and strategies:

- promote higher levels of wellness, stability and quality of life
- decrease the need for costly, invasive therapies
- decrease the incidence of serious mental health challenges
- decrease traumatic life events
- increase understanding of these mental health challenges and decrease stigma
- raise participants' level of hope and encourages their actively working toward wellness
- increase participants' sense of personal responsibility and empowerment

### WYSAAG Board

Lori Russell, Chairman, Casper  
Charlene Sangrey, Co-Chairman,  
Cheyenne  
Linda Stewart, Secretary/Treasurer, Cheyenne  
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Dallas Curry, Laramie  
Amy Davis, Laramie  
Carole Reeves, Laramie  
Dan McEldowney, Ranchester





# Rodger's Report

Rodger McDaniel  
Deputy Director Wyoming Department of Health  
Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division

## Investing In Recovery

The structure for delivering most mental health and substance abuse services in Wyoming was built on a foundation constructed more than half a century ago. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy asked this nation why more than half a million of its citizens were living in mental institutions, 45% of them for more than 10 years! President Kennedy proposed what was then "a bold new approach" which would allow many of those persons to receive treatment in their own communities. The current community mental health system was born.

"With respect to mental illness, our chief aim," he said, "is to get people out of state custodial institutions and back into their communities and homes, without hardship or danger." The question in 1963 was how to do that. The answer to that question was the Community Mental Health Centers Act which Kennedy signed into law in 1963. Funds from that act were used to open hundreds of community mental health centers throughout the country including several in Wyoming. In the early years, these community mental health centers were funded largely with federal grants, later augmented with local funds. The state of Wyoming contributed very little to these programs. That changed in the early 1980's when the federal courts became active in mandating the deinstitutionalization of patients in state hospitals. Local communities began asking for more and more state dollars to pay for this policy.

Even so, it is a rather recent development that the state government has invested significantly in the treatment of mental illness and addiction. Fewer than 10 years ago, the relatively meager federal block grant made up more than a third of the state's budget for treatment services. Today, the federal portion is less than 9%! In the meantime, Wyoming's state funding of the community mental health system has more than doubled since 2001. Unlike the early years when most of the funding came from Washington, the vast majority of funding now comes from the state legislature.

The current structure was the answer to questions about services in the 1960's and 1970's. But in 2010, those questions have changed and the service delivery structure may no longer be the best answer to the new questions. There are three new questions the structure should be required to answer. The first is how to provide services on a regional basis to assure citizens that regardless of where they choose to

live in Wyoming, they will have access to a full continuum of behavioral health services within a reasonable distance from home. The second question is how can clients have more choice about what services they desire and where they need to go to get them. The real question is how to finance a system of care that is family and client driven?

The third question is whether we are spending money on treatment or investing in recovery! There is a difference and changes in the system should reflect them.

In the 60's and 70's when the issues were different and funding was mostly federal and local, a delivery system that encouraged numerous non-profit corporations to develop locally controlled centers made sense. Today it makes less sense. The state has an overriding interest in making sure that mental health and substance abuse services are a part of the effort to improve educational success rates, control the skyrocketing costs of out-of-home placements of children and reduce the costs in the criminal justice system related to mental illness and addiction.

It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice.  
~Author Unknown

As we consider recommendations for going into the next decade, the discussion must not be so much about new money as about new systems. There should be a dialogue about the structure for delivering services and the systems that serve those who need the services. I realize that by simply suggesting this conversation take place, there are those who will be unhappy with me. Nonetheless, we are entering an era of diminishing resources and that alone requires consideration of changes. Moreover, a broader recovery focused structure will produce greater efficiencies and also meet the growing needs for recovery and wellbeing of people across the state of Wyoming.



# Calling All Advocates To Action

by Jamie Dakis, WYSAAG Board Member

There are two famous sayings that come to mind when we think of doing good in the world and leaving it a better place. One is by President John F. Kennedy, *"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you do for your country."*

Today, give a stranger one of your smiles. It might be the only sunshine he sees all day.



The second one is from a Zen Master that states, *"Now that my house has burnt down I have a better view of the moon."*

We, as WYSAAG Board Members, have an advocacy duty to do the same in respects to Mental Health and Substance Abuse objectives. Our leaders, whomever they may be, are calling out to us to come up with honest, consistent and inventive strategies and suggestions to help improve all aspects of anti-stigma goals, further workable solutions to problems that plague all people with disabilities, and to further the positive health care results that have helped each one of us individually or as a whole.

Each of us, no matter who we are or where we come from, whether we are male or female, young or old, well or burdened with illness, must come forth as unified voices to express to the gen-

eral public and society at large, as well as our legislative representatives, and the United States Government; what our needs are and what we believe will help better the all encompassing issues of healthcare in America, including the Labor needs of Americans with Disabilities.

It takes just a few moments of our lives to discuss, join forces, and contact our local and statewide United States Government Representatives of whatever field we believe would gain momentum in upward movements for the recovery of all people who are presently suffering in any aspect of recovery.

We owe this to the next generation, and I diligently hope that this plea shall be heard and observed as an attempt to call every one of us to action.

Thank you all for taking the time to hear me out.

## Don't Get Overwhelmed

by Cheryl Sherman, WYSAAG Board Member

In my life, everything that comes up is exciting and interesting and I want to do it. My advice: "Don't get overwhelmed!" I have said yes to so many different things that even though I only work 8 hours a week, I'm up to my neck in responsibility. This does not help me in my journey toward recovery or managing the parts of my mental illness that nibble away at me. My therapist says I should have a bunch of sticky notes with "NO!" written on them and then I could hand them out when someone wants me to do something.

I went through all the things that I am committed to and have come to some conclusions. I have decided that WYSAAG is important, the Bishop search

that I am on for my church is important, the class I am taking is important, NAMI is important, and my job is important. That's five things. Some would probably have me whittle down even more, so that I have more time to myself and can do a good job for the things I have committed to. I think, though, that I can juggle these things and do a good job for all the organizations involved. These take a big time commitment and that can be the biggest problem of all—not having time for myself.

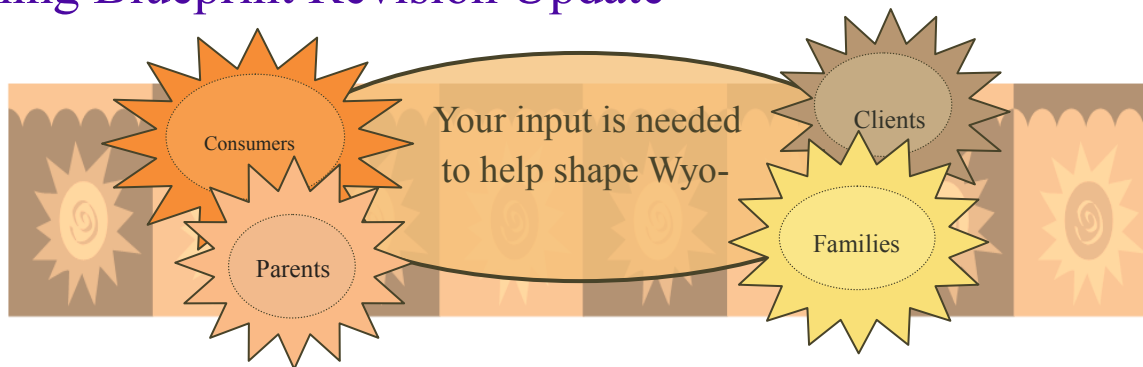
My advice to you is get involved in your community, experience the fun of different sorts of ways to spend your time, but don't commit to too much. I encourage you to choose WYSAAG as one of the things you choose to do because the work we do is important and you won't be sorry if you get involved with us.





# Special Interest

## Wyoming Blueprint Revision Update



Wyoming has launched a project to revise Wyoming's comprehensive plan related to mental health and substance abuse. The mission of this project is to revise Wyoming's comprehensive plan for the prevention, early intervention and treatment of addiction and mental illness by incorporating emerging trends from the behavioral health field and to serve as the roadmap for the continuing development of Wyoming's system.

In December and January, the project conducted statewide surveys, focus group meetings, individual and group interviews and gathered input from several state advisory committees, consumer organizations and provider organizations. In January, the project hosted the first Central Advisory Group (CAG) meeting. The CAG will meet

monthly to advise the project and review focus group and stakeholder meeting information, key informant interview information, surveys and other data collected as part of the project. In February, the CAG will begin reviewing chapter summaries as the project moves into Stage 3.

The Division encourages all Wyoming stakeholders to participate in this important project by providing feedback and comment on the current system.

### Ways to Participate

**Send your written comments**  
to [nrvandemark@comcast.net](mailto:nrvandemark@comcast.net)

### Participate in on-line discussions

Log on to the Blueprint website to participate in on-line

discussions and find the latest information about the update process at [www.wyo-blueprint2010.com](http://www.wyo-blueprint2010.com)

### Complete the Stakeholder Survey at [www.wyo-blueprint2010.com](http://www.wyo-blueprint2010.com)

OR you can find a copy of the survey in the middle of this WYSAAG newsletter (Please do it online or mail it—please do not do both)

### Schedule an individual telephone discussion

Call Nancy at 303-808-1960 or e-mail at [nrvandemark@comcast.net](mailto:nrvandemark@comcast.net)

For more information about the Blueprint project, you can also contact Eydie Trautwein at [eydie.trautwein@health.wyo.gov](mailto:eydie.trautwein@health.wyo.gov) or (307) 777-6493 (1-800-535-4006).



# Advocacy Information For Parents

by Dick Lefevre, Advocate, Protection and Advocacy, Inc.

When Protection & Advocacy (P&A) is asked to help a special education student, we first try to help parents or guardians learn to advocate for their student. Before we coach or help draft letters to schools or agencies, or help file appeals or petitions, we try to educate parents in special education law. We almost always refer our callers to this website <http://www.wrightslaw.com/>.

The website's publishers hope to sell their books, but they also offer lots of free information: articles by experts on testing and evaluation, the rights of students in special education, and how to prepare for and participate in an Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting.



Caption describing picture or graphic.

Their website's statement about what can be found on the site is accurate:

"Parents, educators, advocates, and attorneys come to Wrightslaw for accurate, reliable information about special education law, education law, and advocacy for children with disabilities. ... You will find thousands of articles, cases, and resources about dozens of topics."

The menu on the lower left side of the site's homepage will guide readers to topics that are relevant to their concerns. Parents who don't want to overlook one of their child's rights can get a systematic overview of special education by reading the materials for the 2008 "Summer School for Parents" <http://www.wrightslaw.com/nltr/08/nl.0624.htm>.

P&A has a popular "Individualized Education Program (IEP) Checklist" to assist parents, guardians, and students with disabilities in obtaining special educational services. The Checklist can be downloaded from <http://www.wypanda.com/publications.asp> or obtained by contacting our offices:

Protection Advocacy System, Inc

7344 Stockman St

Cheyenne, WY 82009

Phone: (307) 632-3496

Fax: (307) 638-0815

Email: [wypanda@wypanda.com](mailto:wypanda@wypanda.com)

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Lander, WY 82520

Phone: (307) 332-8268

Fax: (307) 332-2842

Email: [wypandl@wypanda.com](mailto:wypandl@wypanda.com)



"Never regret  
yesterday. Life  
is in you today,  
and you make  
your tomorrow."

-L. Ron Hubbard



# NAMI

## NAMI Affiliate Consumer Support Groups

**NAMI-Wyoming would like to offer a special thank you** to the NAMI members who recently completed a very comprehensive three-day training that is required to facilitate their local consumer affiliate support groups. These members are currently in the process of establishing Connections groups.

Connections support groups are open to all adults with mental illness, regardless of diagnosis. These groups meet weekly for 90 minutes, are offered free of charge, follow a flexible structure without an educational format, and do not recommend or endorse any medications or other medical therapies. These groups are led by trained individuals who are in recovery themselves. They understand the daily challenges and can offer encouragement and support. All groups are confidential—you can share as much or as little personal information as you wish.

Too often mental illness is an isolating experience and can be accompanied by profound anxiety. For those diagnosed with a mental illness, talking with someone to share coping strategies and insights, as well as problems and concerns, can be an important link in the path to recovery.

Fifteen people from these six affiliate communities participated: Cody, Powell, Greybull & Basin, Evanston, Casper, Pinedale, and Laramie. Please contact NAMI-Wyoming at (307) 265-2573 to connect with one of the local Connections affiliates.

## Information Exchange

Please send NAMI Wyoming any current information you may have access to regarding mental illness so we may share it with all our members in our newsletters. This is a wonderful opportunity for our members to help each other by submitting any and all information you feel may have any relevance at all to anyone dealing with mental illness, whether family members or consumers.

Judging from the feedback received, this kind of exchange is part of what you want from the NAMI Wyoming newsletter. Thank you in advance for your participation in this very worthwhile endeavor.

You may email it to NAMI Wyoming at [nami-wyo@qwestoffice.net](mailto:nami-wyo@qwestoffice.net), call them at 1- 888-882-4968 or 1-307-265-2573, or send it to their mailing address at: NAMI Wyoming, P.O. Box 1883, Casper, WY 82602

SAVE THE DATE: NAMI Wyoming Annual State Conference and Leadership Institute "Healthy Minds and Healthy Bodies"

April 30 - May 1, 2010

Casper, WY  
Hilton Garden Inn

For more information contact NAMI Wyoming at [nami-wyo@qwestoffice.net](mailto:nami-wyo@qwestoffice.net), 1- 888-882-4968 or 1-307-265-2573.

## Family-to-Family Teacher Training

NAMI Wyoming will be conducting training for teachers of our highly acclaimed "Family-to-Family" educational program June 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>. NAMI Wyoming needs family members of people who have mental illnesses to train to teach this program in your area.

Family-to-family is a free twelve-week, evidence-based course that has changed the lives of families afflicted with mental illness. Having completed Family-to-Family classes is definitely a benefit, but not a requirement to teach this class; nor is having a NAMI affiliate

in your area a stipulation; however, there is a minimum requirement of two teachers per area.

Linda Valenzuela and Jane Johnson will be teaching this class with Elizabeth Lugg helping. For more information or to register for this training please call the state NAMI office at 307-265-2573 or 1-888-882-4968. They are most grateful to all of the volunteers!

NAMI WY  
would like  
to email  
you their  
Newsletter

In the effort to conserve funds and use money wisely, NAMI Wyoming encourages anyone with access to email to send us your email address so we can send you our electronic newsletters. The newsletter will be published more often than the hard copy and of course arrive much more quickly than the "snail mail" versions.

Please send your email addresses to: [nami-wyo@qwestoffice.net](mailto:nami-wyo@qwestoffice.net).

# Dubois Youth Succeed as Young Entrepreneurs

By Amanda Verheul, Dubois Youth Activities, Inc.

Dubois Youth Activities Inc. (DYA) located in beautiful Dubois, WY, is a youth educational organization that provides programming for the prevention and development of at-risk youth.

The Young Entrepreneurs Program recently celebrated its first year anniversary with record numbers of participants and proceeds earned by the student operated business ventures. After a successful concession stand season during the summer, the students refocused their attention on the "KidStuff" line of soaps and lip balms they created last year. They decided to add a couple of new skin care products to the line, so a cucumber-melon sugar scrub and a hand-balm were created, along with two kinds of soap and three flavors of lip balm: Cherry, Pina Colada and Citrus Splash. The students used another marketing strategy in order to capitalize on the holiday season by creating colorful and decorative gift baskets, stuffed full of KidStuff products, sweets and other Christmas goodies.

The new additions were a big hit and the Young Entrepreneurs filled dozens of orders for baskets of varying sizes and prices. Students also sold the baskets and individual KidStuff products at DYA Community Suppers and at Dubois Super Foods. In just over one month, the students sold over \$1,200 worth of merchandise, with half of the proceeds going to the students who made and sold the products.

Our second semester of Community Suppers, which are prepared and served by our culinary/hospitality course students, have likewise been an unqualified success. Our focus this semester has been on community service, and we were blessed with many high school students from the National Honor Society and Key Club volunteering to help prepare and serve the meals, even washing dishes and mopping floors.

Over the 12 week course students served more than 1,100 meals at ten Community Suppers, some of which were themed, such as a Mediterranean night, Hawaiian luau, Mexican fiesta and Christmas party with live holiday music. In total, the students donated more than 320 hours of service to their community—something for which they can and should be very proud. With almost two dozen successful Community Suppers to their credit, the students are fast becoming experienced, seasoned veterans of the culinary and hospitality industry. The idea of a student operated catering service is being developed and could possibly be a natural crossover to our Young Entrepreneurs Program.

As the administrators of a \$17,000 Youth Engagement Initiative grant awarded by Wyoming First Lady, Nancy Freudenthal, DYA has used some of those funds to provide the teenage population of our community with fun, substance-free activities. In the last year, DYA has provided youth with the opportunity to bridge all age gaps and support each other during several substance-free supervised activities. In 2010 DYA was nominated for a Starfish Thrower Award for efforts made to alleviate the suffering of those who face the challenges of addiction. Plans for 2010 include several family and community dances, as well as a community fun run with a motivational presentation from a world class Olympic medal winner.



Once you choose hope, anything's possible.

~Christopher Reeve

**Special Thanks to Cory R. Meyer**

**She works hard and does a great job editing and revising the articles for the newsletter.**





# Disability Through the Eyes of an Artist

by Marcus Jackson with assistance from Alice Carter

On Saturday I sat and stared out the window of the Link Art Gallery, watching the snow fall and surrounded by beautiful art work of every kind imaginable. My eyes wandered over the pictures and gravitated to the young man at the other end of the room sitting in a chair drawing. On February 20, the Link Art Gallery located at 1600 Capitol in Cheyenne, hosted The Tonya Jackson Talent Expression Program Art Exhibition. The art work will be on display at the People First office located at 1623 Central Avenue until March 4. Then it will be displayed at the March Disability Awareness Dinner on March 4th at the Cheyenne Holiday Inn where one will be able to see the winning submissions.

Marcus Jackson applied for a grant with

the Department of Health and chose this art contest as a way of showcasing people with physical and mental challenges. Marcus' mother was an artist; her drawing ability surpassed that of most. She also had schizophrenia and alcohol issues. Marcus lost his mother when she was just 31 years old but he often talks of watching her draw pictures and being mesmerized by her agile ability with a pencil. He said, "I would watch her draw for hours wondering how she did what she did all the while wanting to do the same."

"Disability" is an umbrella underneath which a staggering array of diagnoses can be wedged, often defining what a person cannot do. When we look at someone we often judge them by what we see. But as I sat and studied the

art that was submitted by people with all kinds of mental and physical challenges, I realized that it leveled the playing field: just what Mr. Jackson wanted to do. There was no way of denying the talents of these artists. People with disabilities are often more flexible, compassionate, stubborn and resilient than others. They have to be. Mr. Jackson has allowed us to see that we are all valuable and have so much to give.

Marcus would also like to say thank you to the Department of Health—Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division; Tammy Gamino, Coordinator of People First of Wyoming; Sarah Lorenz and George Garcia also of People First; Andy Aldrich with Casey Family Programs; Rebecca Barrett the "Link Art Gallery"; and Alice Carter, Wyoming Kinship Advocacy, for all of their support and assistance. This is the first of what Marcus hopes to be an annual art contest showcasing people with multiple talents not hindered by their disabilities.



Cheyenne Mayor Rick Kaysen and Marcus Jackson

Paintings from the Contest





# Applications Accepted for Mental Health Planning Council

Wyoming's Mental Health Planning Council (MHPC) is looking for new appointed members. The MHPC serves as an advocate for citizens with serious mental illness and/or severe emotional disturbances. The council's function is to monitor and evaluate the yearly allocation and adequacy of mental health services in the state. The MHPC is made up of residents of the state, representatives from the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division and other governmental agencies concerned with this issue, higher education training facilities, and public and private entities concerned with the need, planning, operation, funding, and use of mental health and related services and activities. At least half of the members shall consist of individuals who are not state employees or providers of mental health services. Half of the council members must be persons who have received mental health services and/or their family members.

MHPC members are appointed to a three year term and meet from two to four times a year, usually in Casper. Council members are reimbursed travel expenses for attending these meetings. There are 32 seats on the council. Currently, there are ten vacancies that will be filled by the Governor very soon.

Concerning gubernatorial appointments, Governor Freudenthal writes, "Service on a board or commission helps to accomplish two goals. First, by volunteering your time and energy to the

specific board, you give back to the State of Wyoming. Second, as a member of a board, you are in a position of leadership where your knowledge and opinions affect decisions that affect citizens statewide."

You can learn more about the Mental Health Planning Council and download the Application for Gubernatorial Appointment at <http://governor.wy.gov/board.html?BoardName=Mental%20Health%20Planning%20Council>. The Governor's office will let applicants know, in writing, their selection status.

Any Wyoming resident may apply at any time for one of the many Governor's Boards or Commissions. More information may be found at <http://governor.wy.gov/boards-and-commissions.html> or by contacting Patti Burns, Governor's Executive Assistant, (307) 777-5647 or by e-mailing [pburns@state.wy.us](mailto:pburns@state.wy.us). Openings are listed at <http://governor.wy.gov/Media.aspx?MediaId=1015>.

## Wyoming Kinship Advocacy and Stress Reduction

by Alice M. Carter, Wyoming Kinship Advocacy

Due to the marvels of modern science our society has become sedentary, both the young and the old. This new "take it easy" life style has created a breeding ground for many health problems including, but not limited to, reduced joint flexibility, arthritis/bursitis, high blood pressure, increased body fat, decreased lean body tissue, back pain, breathing difficulties, vision problems, chronic pain, stress related symptoms and the inability to sleep peacefully.

Wyoming Kinship Advocacy understands the needs of our aging population and we have implemented a new program for our grandparents and kinship providers. All providers and the children they care for have been invited to attend Hatha Yoga in Cheyenne. Hatha Yoga is an excellent entry-level activity for older adults and children. The classes are being taught by Zion Studios under the direction of the owner Tim Adams, who understands cuts in funding and has offered us a fantastic deal for our families. WYKA offers respite while the adults attend the classes at no cost to the provider.

The program is in its fifth week and we have had comments from our providers and children that have all been positive. Many of those who attend say they feel that Yoga is more than just an exercise program; they say they feel rejuvenated. Practicing Yoga is calming and provides an opportunity to leave the

stresses of our everyday lives behind and be at peace with a power to focus with our mind, body and spirit.

There are many physical benefits of Hatha Yoga: it improves flexibility and muscle joint mobility; strengthens, tones, and builds muscles; corrects posture; strengthens the spine; eases back pain; improves muscular-skeletal conditions such as bad knees, tight shoulders and neck, swayback and scoliosis; increases stamina; creates balance and grace; stimulates the glands of the endocrine system; improves digestion and elimination; increases circulation; improves heart conditions; improves breathing disorders; boosts immune response; decreases cholesterol and blood sugar levels; and encourages weight loss.

Yoga teaches us how to breathe, bringing back the flexibility in our ribcage while replenishing, warming, and cleansing our bodies. Correct breathing allows us to slow down our heart rate which, in turn, improves focus and increases concentration. Yoga creates a situation where all body parts are balanced and that no undue stress is placed on any particular organ, muscle, joint or bone. The most positive benefit of Yoga is stress reduction, something we can all benefit from. We hope to continue these classes for our providers well into the summer.

# What is International Peer Support (IPS)?

By Shery Mead's International Peer Support Website

<http://mentalhealthpeers.com/>

Shery Mead is a national leader in peer support and recovery. Shery has developed a program called "Intentional Peer Support" (IPS). She describes IPS as a way of thinking about purposeful relationships. This is different from traditional service relationships in several ways. The following is from her website:

- \* Intentional Peer Support is a process where both people (or a group of people), use the relationship to look at things from new angles, develop greater awareness of personal and relational patterns, and to support and challenge each other as we try new things.
- \* It doesn't start with the assumption of "a problem." Instead, people are taught to listen for how and why each of us has learned to make sense of our experiences (and then use the relationship to create new ways of seeing, thinking and doing).
- \* IPS promotes a 'trauma-informed' way of relating--instead of asking 'what's wrong,' we ask 'what happened?'
- \* IPS looks beyond the notion of individuals needing to change and examines our lives in the context of our relationships and communities.
- \* IPS relationships are viewed as partnerships that enable both parties to learn and grow--rather than as one person needing to 'help' another.
- \* Instead of a focus on what we need to stop or avoid doing, we are encouraged to move towards what and where we want to be. At the end of the day, it is really about building stronger, healthier communities.

This is a different way of thinking and doing business. It is similar to the Wraparound model that has started in Wyoming's children's mental health community. Through relationships and self-determination, people recover, stay well, and have great lives.



## Change is Inevitable, Progress is Optional

by Lou Dowell, Mastery Level Peer Specialist

**What is recovery?** To me, recovery is finding, learning and accepting the healthy coping skills and tools required to have a productive and content life as you see it. Recovery is unique for every individual. There are common traits and themes, yet no two people have the exact same recovery scenario. Recovery is fluid not rigid. There is a necessity for change and growth. Stagnate water breeds disease (disease) and so, I believe, does a rigid "recovery." The word recovery is different for everyone. In today's society we often associate the word recovery with substance abuse; not necessarily so. If we are changing our life to what we perceive to be

better and are not harming anyone else in the process, to me that is recovery. It could be as simple as deciding to be happy when you wake up not feeling well or it could be dealing with a trauma from the past or many other situations or actions we had no control over at the time. ***Taking charge of what we have control over and learning healthy coping strategies for those we things we do not. Recovery is emotional sobriety, knowledge and the will to act upon that knowledge. It is the recovery of the real self and the resulting resumption of healthy inner and interpersonal growth.*** This is my definition of recovery.



What you can do, or dream you can do, begin it: boldness has genius, power and magic in it.

-Johann von Goethe

# Productivity of the Peer Support Specialist

by Dan Meyers, LCSW, Certified Peer Specialist, Author, Advocate

I believe peer support presence empowers clients. This is the main reason for personal growth and recovery along with the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP®) which can be ever changing. I am grateful for my education as an LCSW; however, I increase and benefit my formal education through my training as a Peer Support Specialist. Formal education did not prepare me for this. But as I go on, I can use peer support training and the experiences of others to aid in my peer support efforts. Therapy is somewhat useful, but peer to peer is a much stronger connection and Peer Support Specialists create a much stronger relationship as well as the power for positive change. The peer support position enables the peer specialist to do what other caregivers can not. Sometimes peer specialists need to understand issues like medications and diagnosis—and use this information to help others with hope that recovery is achievable. With a Peer Specialist, a client feels on equal footing, calmer and less anxious. Because of the stronger relationship, com-

munication can be more open, less fearful or paranoid, and easier to be truthful, therefore, more productive. Peers working side-by-side with therapists benefit the client as well. We are in a new age, one where experience in the mental health field matters. As peer support specialists meet there is a vast array of skills, abilities, and talents. Peer specialists meet yearly to gain additional training and knowledge. They share what their have experiences and take what is useful to each. Their knowledge to do the work comes mostly from their own experience. Sometimes it comes easy to me—sometimes not.

Dan Meyers is the author of *The Spirit of the Lion*, a story of hope, recovery, and resiliency recently published by Author house Publishing,

<http://www.authorhouse.com/bookstore>. This book is written for those who suffer from severe and persistent mental illness. It is about the trials of a man who reached from poverty and despair to the heights of obtaining an MSW and LCSW. Using a specific style of writing, the reader will get a realistic view of what the illness is like and can do. It is an autobiographical, educational, and inspirational experience that needs told.



I put one foot in front of the other & keep on going

David Friedberg

Member of the Drop in, student at LCCC.....Peak wellness.....work @ warren Air Force Base...People First of WYO

## Speak Up When There is Discrimination

by Tom Musgrove, Peer Support Specialist

Being able to openly face up to various types of discrimination is an important step in recovery. Before I can be an advocate on my own behalf, I have to realize that I have an illness/disability. It requires thinking about myself in a completely different way. I have to be able to stand up to those discriminating against me and demonstrate through rational means just how and why they are wrong.

There are times when living a productive life is not enough. Sometimes, I have to be assertive and demonstrate my recovery (to myself and others) by taking a stand against those who discriminate. People can get in a habit of discriminating and not even know they are doing it. Sometimes the only way to demonstrate my recovery is to shine a light on the stigma. I have to be aware of the possibility of stigma all the time. Sometimes it

is the only way that I can get a good understanding of why people are doing what they do to me.

Here is just one example. There is a person in my town responsible for notifying residents of maintenance to be performed on the water lines. My house was one that needed this maintenance. But I was not informed that my water would be

shut off.

This person was closely involved when I was having the worst of my symptoms and I believe just assumed that I wasn't competent. I had to tell that person that I was not at all happy about having my water turned off before being notified. The situation was resolved, yet damages were done!

It could have been worse if I had not faced that person. Different people respond to me differently. Several other people who know of my illness do not treat me poorly. They treat me like they would treat anyone else. Sadly I still have to watch for those who are either ignorant or just plain cruel and try to stand up for myself with them as part of my recovery.





# Advocate

By Lucretia Maes, Peer Specialist

I was recently asked to participate in a panel discussion at the Governor's Roundtable on Children's Mental Health and Starfish Awards. The panel included the State Superintendent of Instruction, the Wyoming Department of Health Director, the Department of Family Services Director, a leading state senator, and me. I was there as a mother, consumer and professional. This is what I shared and what I learned.

I enjoy my job as a Peer Specialist. It allows me the opportunity to assist individuals like myself in understanding the mental health system, learning to better advocate for themselves, and communicating in an effective manner. Most importantly, it allows me to create hope where it has been taken away; where there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

One of my favorite sayings is "I keep what I have, only by giving it away." When I help someone else it also helps me by reminding me of my struggles, where I came from and how I got to where I am today. I found the panel to be insightful of the problems we are faced with.

It seems that the system needs more advocates... people who can speak up, not out of frustration, but as a consumer who wants to be part of the solution. I think there are times when we as consumers get annoyed with not having our needs met. In response, we take our concerns to the next level under the assumption that everyone already knows our needs. I believe this lack of communication, internally, can make it seem that the system has failed the consumer.

There are communication barriers externally as well. I believe this occurs when consumers become too focused with the problem rather than the solution. There are several ways to find a solution but this becomes very difficult when all we can see is the problem.

In my opinion, there is a lack of humanity in the system. I am not sure if it is due to the over load of work on care providers, or perhaps it is the thought of "I am the professional and if you listen to me, things will not be the way they are right now." People need to remember that there are feelings in-

involved and that an attitude of that nature will lead to the system once again failing the consumer.

In the panel, people spoke about gaps as well as needs. There was discussion of prevention. That is one of the most essential change needed, in my opinion. There seems to be this exhaustion in services and service workers. Meanwhile, more focus should be on prevention, hope, advocacy and learning basic life skills—designed to suit each individual.

Everyone is fighting some great battle. How they got to the battle is different for everyone. Nobody got to where they are in just one day. So, there is no miracle that it will change in just one day. Education of the community and society as a whole would help create and open the doors that are needed for change. Once these doors are open, it will allow the consumer to feel heard. Once the consumer is heard they will build a trustful relationship. That is the key to create the hope needed for change.



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## March

Su	Mo	Tue	We	Th	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

### March Events

14th Daylight Savings  
(Spring Forward)  
17th St Patrick's Day

When the world  
says, "Give up,"  
Hope whispers,  
"Try it one more  
time."

~Author Unknown

## April

Su	Mo	Tue	We	Th	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

### April Events

Stress Awareness Month

1st April Fool's Day  
4th Easter

2010

### May Events

9th Mother's Day  
31st Memorial Day

## May 2010

Su	Mo	Tue	We	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

## WYSAAG MEMBERSHIP FORM

Anyone may join!

your first and last name

mailing address

town/city

zip code

email address

As a WYSAAG member...

- Can vote in election for board
- Will receive information about mental health and substance abuse issues
- Will receive the WySAAG newsletter
- Will support this statewide organization
- There are currently no dues

*WYSAAG is an active statewide membership organization including Wyoming adults with mental health diagnoses- including those with co-occurring substance abuse diagnoses- and their families.*

*The Wyoming Self-Advocated Advisory Group's mission is dedicated to advocacy for improving the systems of care.*

Please submit your articles...

- email [wysaag@gmail.com](mailto:wysaag@gmail.com)
- By mail: send to WYSAAG  
c/o MHSAD  
6101 Yellowstone Road, Ste. 220  
Cheyenne, WY 82009
- Articles should be 500 words or less. Please include your permission to publish your name as the writer. Articles will most likely be slightly revised and edited. If there are significant changes, the author will be notified before publication.

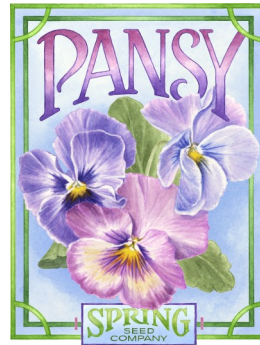
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Visit us on the web:

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Thank you to the  
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